Dangers from use of Radioactivity in Nutrition Research

2327. SHRI SHAMIM HASHMI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that use of radio-activity in nutrition research poses danger to the experimental human guinea-pigs and involves ethical considerations and decisions; and

(b) if so whether Government have at any stage given consideration to this problem if so, the guidelines developed, if any, in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (PROF. M. G. K. MENON): (a) Radioactive compounds are not used for nutrition research in human beings; all such research is carried out on laboratory animals; in any case, this is the position as far as India is concerned.

(b) Does not arise.

Danger from Food irradiation Process

2328. SHRI SHAMIM HASHMI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that food irradiation process presents some problem such as changes and destruction of some essential nutritional constituents and if so, the reasons for going ahead with food irradiation;

(b) whether Government are aware that western consumers are bound to protest and reject irradiated food from India; and

(c) whether Government are aware that the entire process of use of radioactive material and irradiation exposes workers and handlers in Atomic Energy Isolife Units and Irradiators to serious dangers; if so, the reasons for use of radio-active material when similar time tested method of preserving food are readily available?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (PROF. M. G. K. MENON): (a) While some changes in food constituents and essential nutrients can occur as a result of irradiation it is minimal when it is done at prescribed dose levels. In such cases the wholesomeness and nutritional adequacy of irradiated foods have been well established by detailed evaluation carried out in several countries including India.

Government are pursuing the food irradiation programme because of its known advantages in the preservation of certain perishable commodities such as reducing post-harvest losses, elimination of pathogens, decontamination of insects and microbes and its importance in meeting the stringent quality standards of food items exported from India.

(b) Food irradiation of many specified items of food is accepted in many countries in Europe and America.

(c) Government is fully aware of the need to ensure the safety of personnel engaged in the food irradiation process. Government have taken adequate safety precautions to ensure protection of workers and the environment from exposure to radiation. There are well known techniques for ensuring this and for monitoring to see that dosages received are well below permissible levels.

Dissolution of Monitoring Panel on Goa Hotels

2329. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the monitoring panel constituted by